

Majority of National Guard members should receive PDMRA checks by March

Washington, DC – Reps. Bruce Braley (D-IA), John Kline (R-MN) and Tim Walz (D-MN) announced today that the National Guard Bureau has released policy guidance to finally pay Iowa and Minnesota National Guard troops the “Respite Leave” payments they were promised. The release of this policy guidance was a required step in providing troops benefits under the Department of Defense’s Post-Deployment/Mobilization Respite Absence (PDMRA) program. The majority of affected Guard members are expected to receive checks by March 19, 2010.

Braley, Kline and Walz have been leading efforts to fix this back pay problem and ensure that thousands of troops nationwide receive proper compensation. The three introduced the Guaranteed Benefits for Our Troops Act (HR 1222) which was signed into law in October as part of the Fiscal Year 2010 National Defense Authorization Act and enables the Pentagon to release the promised benefits.

“This is an exciting and crucial step forward, and I’m happy to announce that hundreds of Iowa National Guard members can look forward to receiving payment very soon,” Braley said. “I’ve been fighting this problem for more than two years, and it’s been my top priority to make sure these brave men and women receive the compensation they earned and deserve. This announcement is very encouraging, but I will continue to closely monitor the progress in processing these benefits and will work until each affected soldier has been paid.”

“For two years I have joined my Congressional colleagues in bipartisan, bicameral efforts asking the Department of Defense to expedite bureaucratic delays so the Minnesota and Iowa soldiers could receive their long overdue pay,” said Kline, a 25-year veteran of the Marine Corps. “I am pleased the majority of soldiers will receive their checks March 15-19, and I will continue to closely monitor this situation in the coming days and weeks until the paychecks are in our soldiers’ hands once and for all.”

“I am glad that our brave men and women will now be receiving the payments they have earned. They never should have had to wait so long,” said Walz. “I have been proud to fight over the past few years with my colleagues to ensure that the Department of Defense fixed this problem. Our soldiers deserved nothing less. I also want to acknowledge that this could not have happened without our late colleague, Chairman Jack Murtha, who was critical in making this fix law.”

Under this fix, thousands of National Guard members across the country will be provided benefits they were promised under the Department of Defense’s PDMRA program, commonly known as “Respite Leave.” Due to a delay between the announcement of the PDMRA program by the Department of Defense and the implementation of the program by the individual services, thousands of soldiers from the Army National Guard have not received proper Respite Leave compensation. Almost 800 Iowa National Guard members and over 2,500 Minnesota National Guard members have been affected by this problem.

Braley first met with Undersecretary of Defense for Personnel and Readiness David Chu on this issue in October 2007. Braley’s work with the House Armed Services Committee led to the inclusion of the Guaranteed Benefits for Our Troops Act in the FY2010 National Defense Authorization Act. In addition, Braley has also served as the lead in Congress on numerous

letters to the leaders of the Armed Services Committees, Defense Appropriations Committees, and Department of Defense which contributed to this fix.

Earlier this month in a House Armed Services Committee hearing on the budget, Congressman [Kline pressed Sec. Gates for answers](#) regarding when members of the National Guard would receive their overdue pay, and this week, the Secretary provided finality to this troubling issue.

Two weeks ago, Walz called White House Chief of Staff Rahm Emanuel. Mr. Emanuel promised to directly address the issue with Secretary Gates.

Braley, Kline and Walz first introduced the Guaranteed Benefits for Our Troops Act in July 2008. It allows the Pentagon to retroactively grant up to \$200 per day to affected troops.